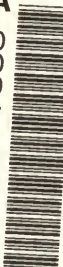
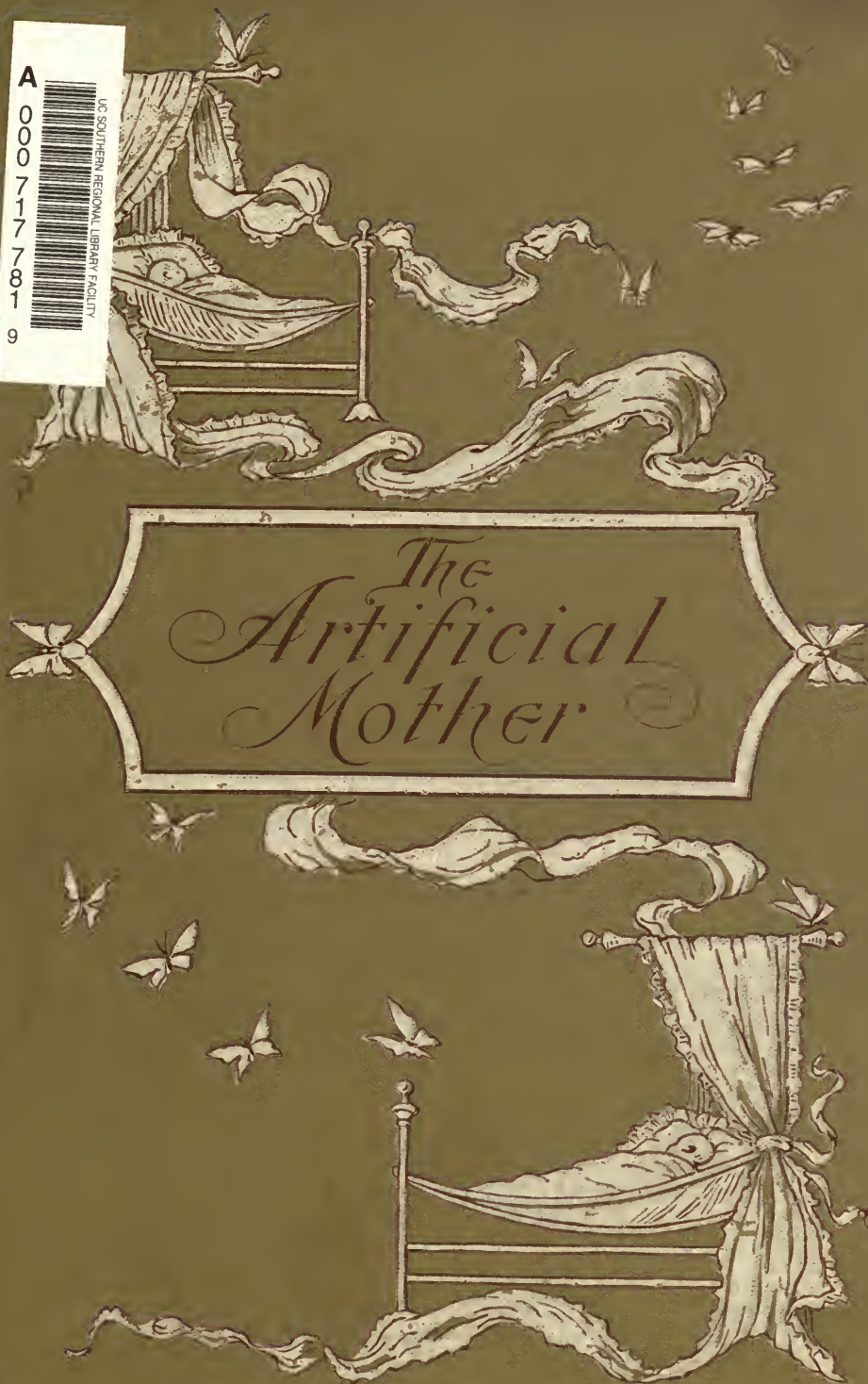


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"SHE RETURNED, A LITTLE OUT OF BREATH, WITH A RED-FACED TYRANT
UNDER EACH ARM,"—Page 14.

Frontispiece.

Putnam's Sons

THE ARTIFICIAL MOTHER

A MARITAL FANTASY

BY

G. H. P.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
A. W. VAN DEUSEN

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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TO
THE OPPRESSED HUSBANDS AND FATHERS
OF THE LAND
AND TO THE UNKNOWN YOUNG MEN WHO MAY
BE CONTEMPLATING MATRIMONY
THIS LITTLE TREATISE IS SYMPATHETICALLY
DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR

The following paper, written nearly a quarter of a century ago (when the world seemed younger) for the purpose of promoting the gayety, not of nations but of a very serious literary society, has been thought worthy of preservation in book form, not on the ground of any literary quality, but because of its philanthropic purpose, and because also the narrative presented situations which could be taken advantage of by the pencil of a clever draftsman.

New York, June, 1894.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE ARTIFICIAL MOTHER

THE ARTIFICIAL MOTHER.

A MARITAL FANTASY.

“NO,” I said, “I can’t stand this any longer. I might as well have no wife at all as to have one who, instead of belonging to me, her lawful lord and master, is at the beck and call of sundry small specimens of humanity, to whose remorseless tyranny she yields the implicit and uncomplaining obedience of the most abject slave !”

Numbers eight and nine of our little family circle had arrived together, and, sturdy little fellows that they were, had recognized the situation at a glance, had

deposed number seven from her position of supremacy, and had set up a despotism over their mother and the household, perhaps the most unmerciful that had as yet been experienced.

It will be apparent, from this preliminary word, that I am a married man, sufficiently so, the superficial reader may imagine. But it is precisely my complaint that, while my opportunities for the development of my parental qualities are unsurpassed, my married life, as far as the society of my wife is concerned, does not amount to—well, the value of a Confederate dollar.

If, going “fair shares” with my progeny, I had been permitted to put in a claim for say an even *tenth* of her attention, I should have nothing to say. But those

ogres of children pull her to pieces in small mouthfuls through the twenty-four hours between their nine voracious selves, without giving me a chance for even a thirty-second nibble. In giving them their classification in the animal kingdom, I should, I think, place them under the head of "Polly-pophagi," or "Mother-devourers."

I was just beginning to console myself with the thought that before number one became old enough to sit up evenings, number seven would learn to go to sleep before midnight, when numbers eight and nine arrived, as I said, "all in a heap," and deranged my calculations. "No," I said, for perhaps the 999th time, as the maternal slave, after eliminating one and two in a flood of disgrace and tears (that

gave them the appearance of a compound waterspout), tucking up three, four, and five, who were accidentally good, and turning over to me the cradles containing six and seven, with injunctions to "keep them stirring," rushed off to obey the vociferous calls of the despots in chief, the two latest arrivals, "it won't do."

"Polly," I asked, as she returned, a little out of breath, with a red-faced tyrant under each arm, "What do those ('wretches,' I was going to say, but fortunately checked myself in time) *young gentlemen* want?"

"Why, a little motherly affection, to be sure," she answered, commencing to "croon" to them in the language peculiar to mothers and babydom. "They want *me*."

“Bosh,” I rejoined. “They want merely something soft to touch, a swinging motion to addle their brains (if they have any), and a monotonous din in their ears, and they would be just as well satisfied if these were supplied by a steam-engine as by their mother. It is all nonsense to talk of babies having affection. You might as well believe in their Calvinism, or transcendentalism, or any other product of later life.”

Polly, however, was too absorbed in the “crooning” process to listen to my insinuations, and the beginning of a growl in one of the cradles at my feet recalled me to my own duty. But while I worked I pondered. The word uttered in jest remained in my mind. “*A steam-engine!*” Yes! Why not? Or an engine of some

kind to perform at least this routine labor of keeping the young savages at rest by keeping them in motion. Something steady, and soft, and swinging, and "crooning." Pshaw! Science had solved worse problems than this. It is simply the construction of an "Artificial Mother." The thing is possible, and it shall be done! I gave my cradle a kick of malicious satisfaction, that evoked from number seven a roar of rebellious protest, and then absorbed myself in the fascination of the thought.

On my way to business the next morning, I called at the studio of an artist friend to see a new picture, and my eye rested on a lay-figure, standing, gracefully draped, in one corner. It flashed across me that this was just what I wanted, and I



"I GAVE MY CRADLE A KICK OF MALICIOUS SATISFACTION,"—Page 16.

persuaded my friend to spare it to me for a time for some work I myself had in hand.

I did not want to startle Polly or to arouse prematurely the suspicions of the twins, so I carried the figure up into a disused garret, and devoted all the spare hours of the ensuing week to experimenting upon her. She was, fortunately for my purpose, of the finest Paris make, steel-sprunged, and double extra-jointed, and there was question merely of supplying the inward power ("true inwardness") and the outward appurtenances.

I will not weary my readers with all the details of my labors. I became so absorbed in my task that I could hardly give thought to anything else. My business suffered, and my wife complained that my face was getting a vacant stare upon it

and she thought I was spending too many hours at that horrid club. It is sufficient to say that after various ineffectual experiments with steam, compressed air, and electricity, I at length succeeded in placing in the body of my lay woman a clock-work combination which, by a series of spiral connections with the head, arms, and shoulders, moved these in a uniform swing, timed to coincide with that of the rocking-chair in which I had placed her. The periodicity and harmony of the movements were perfect, and I even flattered myself that there was some special grace in the upward sweep of the arms, and quite a motherly effect to the downward bend of the head.

But the crowning triumph of my labors was the duplex "*crooning attachment*," by

means of which was generated the necessary "*rumble jumble*" (with those monotonous sounds I was only too familiar), which came streaming out of the mouth in an unbroken succession that nothing but the action of the "safety stop-valve" could break off.

This part of my "mother" cost me much care and anxiety, for I knew that unless this could be made a success, all her other excellent qualities would go for nothing. My mechanical readers will easily guess the principle of the "attachment." A series of diminutive organ tubes were arranged in the chest, the valves of which worked by clock springs, while the sound was conducted through a larynx, (delicately constructed from a turkey's gizzard) to the mouth. The first attempt

with the combination produced only a series of unearthly gasps, at the bottom of which I thought I detected the ghost of a gobble, but a little modification of the valves, the treatment of the gizzard with a weak solution of aqua regia, which softened away all its harsh reminiscences, and the interposition between this and the tubes of a pair of miniature drum-heads (made of mouse-skin) as *reverberators* of the sound, gave me the happy result of a complete series of "croon waves." I was able also finally to arrange these in three sets of chords, so that the crooning could be made *piano*, *andante*, or *furiossissimo*, according to the age, condition, or degree of obstreperousness, of the infant being operated upon.

Of course, the clock-work upon which

the crooning depended was entirely distinct from the system controlling the movements of the body, being of necessity much more complex and delicate, as supplying what might be termed the "brain power" of the creature. When I noticed the precision with which my safety stop-valve worked, bringing the most furious croon-waves to a complete stop within the tenth of a second, I could not help longing that its application could be extended beyond the range of *artificial* mothers. What an ideal domestic existence would be that in which the natural article could be brought to a safe stop within the tenth of a second !

It now remained only to put the finishing touches on my "mother" in completing her attire and adornments. I gave

careful attention to the details of these, for I knew that those twins were very sharp fellows, and I did not propose to give them any ground for irreverence or even for criticism in the appearance of the lady who was to stand to them *in loco matris*. One of Polly's nursery gowns, with the color of which the twins were perfectly familiar, was skilfully abstracted from her wardrobe, and gracefully draped round the "mother," whose arms and breast had first been carefully padded.

The face was delicately touched up by my artist friend (whom I had finally been obliged to take into my confidence), until it wore an air of maternal affection and solicitude almost surpassing that of the original; and the hair (which was one of the more expensive items of my purchased



"THE FACE WAS DELICATELY TOUCHED UP BY MY ARTIST FRIEND."

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paraphernalia) was arranged as nearly as possible in the regular "disarrangement" to which the babies were accustomed. This I found difficult to effect without impairing the safety of the fastenings, and I dreaded somewhat the chance of one of the twins in an enterprising moment giving a grab at the "light ringlet just sweeping his face," but it was a risk that had to be incurred.

And now she was complete, and my heart beat high with a sense of triumph and expectation, while visions came before me of the time when, with a whole team of "artificial mothers" crooning peace and comfort through the house, Polly and I could roam away in blissful idleness and renew the days of our youth.

A carefully prepared rag-baby was laid

in the arms of the expectant mother, the two sets of works were wound up, the starting spring touched, and the rocking and fondling and crooning commenced, with such perfect naturalness, grace, and harmony that I was carried away by my delight, and caught myself saying, "My dear, you are a grand success, and reflect credit on your maker."

I put on the stops, and the baby dropped with an easy motion of the arms into the "mother's" lap, the crooning softened down into the gentle murmur of the "piano," then ceased altogether, and the mother sat looking at her sleeping child with an aspect of such calm dignity and sweet motherliness that I was irresistibly impelled to give her a kiss of husbandly approval.



“THE ‘MOTHER’ SAT LOOKING AT HER CHILD, WITH AN ASPECT OF CALM DIGNITY AND SWEET MOTHERLY AFFECTION.”—Page 24.

“What would Polly say?” I thought, as I wiped from my lips the slight touch left on them by the damp paint. Removing the rag-baby, I lifted with some effort the chair containing my handiwork down to the door of my parlor, which, since the advent of the twins, had been appropriated by them as a special private nursery, where my occasional presence was permitted only on sufferance.

The moment seemed propitious for my experiment. I could hear the twins yelling with vociferous indignation for their slave Polly, who had evidently been called into the farther nursery by some outbreak among their predecessors. I opened the door, placed the rocking-chair cosily in front of the fire, smoothed down the drapery and loosened out the

hair of its occupant, and gently laid a twin in each arm. A touch on the springs, and the arms moved up, clasping the little clamorous infants to her breast ; the head bent over, the feet touched the floor, impelling the chair with a uniform swing, and with an equally uniform monotony the steady waves of the "crooning" poured forth from her lips.

The twins hushed their angry complaining and looked up inquiringly at the being to whom their destiny (in the shape of their father) had confided them. It was a moment of terrible suspense. If their keen perceptions discovered the fraud, if they decided that, in addition to the creature comforts of warmth and motion and noise, it *was* essential to their happiness to have also the *je ne sais quoi*

of motherliness that my substitute could not bestow upon them, if (in the language of the day) their unsatisfied yearning revealed to them that their souls were not fed, and their sensibilities not ministered to, my beautiful theories would fall baseless to the ground, and my labor and hopes would indeed have been vain.

But no! Firmly held in the warm embrace of the untiring arms, evenly rocked in the steady swing of the chair, and dinned into unconsciousness by the unbroken stream of sound, they stilled their noisy complainings, accepted the situation, and relapsed into a state of blissful contentment and repose. It was evident that babies had no souls that needed ministering to, and that my "artificial mother" was a success. I threw

myself into an easy-chair with the consciousness that I had done a great work for the world, for myself, for Polly.

Just then I heard her step approaching. The sudden cessation of the wonted cries had alarmed her keen ear, and she came flying in, looking, with the flush of haste and alarm upon her face, especially pretty and charming.

“Our new nurse, my dear,” I said, waving my hand towards the chair.

“A friend who has come in to lend a hand,” I proceeded rather incoherently, seeing that Polly stood back with doubt, bewilderment, and vague apprehension.

“In short, my dear, my new *artificial mother*,” I burst out in desperation, as she still stood and stared, while the rocking-chair went on without ceasing, and



"OUR NEW NURSE, MY DEAR."—Page 28.

the crooning started in on the higher key.

“Artificial what?” cried Polly. “Oh, Tom! what frightful experiments are you making with my blessed boys? Let me have them at once,” she cried, rushing at the figure.

But the babies were but clutched the tighter, the chair swung more swiftly, and the “crooning” burst into a louder strain with what sounded like a defiant ring.

“Give me my children!” shrieked Polly, trying to check the ceaseless swing of the chair, but the “mother” continued imperturbable and only answered her vehemence with a bland, fixed smile.

“Tom, help me; the thing is a demon!” screamed Polly in desperation, pulling frantically at the “mother’s” arms.

But even as she spoke the swinging redoubled in velocity until the two babies grew black in the face, and seemed merged into one. The crooning burst into a savage roar, as if, indeed, a fiend had taken possession of my innocent "mother," and to my excited imagination it really seemed that her eyes flashed fire and her face assumed an expression of demoniacal malice.

Finally, with a ferocious tug, Polly succeeded in pulling the "mother" up from the chair. For a moment they stood facing each other, glaring at each other in rage and defiance until I could hardly tell which looked the more terrible of the two.

Then came a "whirr" and a snap, and with a frightful crashing together, and a



"FOR A MOMENT THEY STOOD FACING EACH OTHER."—Page 30.

last despairing “croon,” the “mother” sank in fragments on the floor, shooting the two babies to the opposite ends of the room, like billiard-balls from a carrom.

With the whirr and the crooning, and the crash still ringing in my ears, I woke up and found I had tipped over the cradle of number seven on top of number six, and that the collision had produced a small pandemonium.

My “artificial mother” was a dream, but may I not hope also—a prophecy?

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